

Bomb + war; Hiroshima

26 January 2009

ANF\Proposal 09\Role of Hiroshima Myth

Lessons about our leadership, and humanity, from US nuclear planning

[First: note the conditions under which the US (hst, truly an ordinary official, not a "monster") actually contemplated and then actually used nuclear weapons first: against a NNWS, an essentially defeated foe (would have been used against Germany if available in time; the war didn't last long enough for that, but US leaders deliberately kept the war going—refraining, against wide recommendations, from making settlement offers that could have ended it sooner, at the risk of allowing a Soviet involvement they wished to avoid—partly in order to have the opportunity/excuse to use the Bombs, as a field test of them, to confirm that the investment in them had not been wasted, and to intimidate the Soviets for postwar purposes.

What should we infer about American leaders, and humans in general, from this decision? **Nothing, I would say, that was not already knowable from the previous five months of firebombing**, especially from its continuation after it was apparent that it was not causing prompt surrender or settlement proposals from the Japanese leaders, and that, on the other hand, for other reasons the leaders were ready to offer acceptable terms.

Except, perhaps, the failure of top leaders to consider the possible effects of use on the long-run, specifically the long prospects of the survival of civilization. (The Chicago scientists who urged consideration of this, and argued against use or perhaps even test, did not reach the top leaders with their concerns). (And scientists with a particular interest in seeing their bombs used—Conant, Oppenheimer, Lawrence-- managed to convince themselves that use would actually provide greater chance that the nations of the world would sacrifice sovereignty to avoid nuclear war.

(They didn't seem to consider at all whether the "successful" use by the one country to have nuclear weapons at all would make the US willing to give up this sovereignty, or make the one adversary that could make the weapons in the short run, the Soviets, willing to forego this exercise of sovereignty and leave the US with a monopoly. It was the latter point that Szilard and others correctly emphasized for the short-run: use would make a competition with the SU inescapable (certainly in the context of continued US possession).

Still, the inferences about these leaders are not as damning as they would necessarily be if the context of the decision had been what some anti-nuclear critics imply or believe (Alperovitz, perhaps Kai, sometimes Kuznick), I would say mistakenly or without sufficient evidence:

(1)--The great weight of the intelligence judgments in the spring of 1945, and of the advice given to Truman, was that Japan was "very likely" to surrender (without use of the Bomb, and without invasion) either if they were offered that they could keep the Emperor, or when the Soviets entered the war on August 8, or if the Bomb were

(SU
dimension)
(any one of
many
minor
intentions
was
enough to
motivate
warfare)
(It didn't
"take" SU
motives...)
(How then
is it
"why")
no "first
mover"
"Why not?"
no one
ordered,
"Why
must we
do this?"
no "must,"
no "necessity"
revealed.

(If not for this — for what? (Colby).

Torture, assass, detention...

Not — "If it takes this — we can't do it." No "last resort," etc.

explicitly threatened, or demonstrated to the Japanese; and that they were “almost certain” to do so if two or three of these elements were combined.

(2)--There was a military/intelligence consensus by May 1945 (or at any rate, before August 6) that there would be no need for an invasion of Japan, either the initial or the full invasion, to achieve (unconditional?) surrender, without use of the Bomb. All the leaders “knew this, with certainty.”

(3)--There was a wide range of highest military and civilian officials and commanders who believed that the Bomb was neither necessary nor advisable, with some believing it was deeply immoral *and who made these views known to the President before August 6.*

(In fact, only Eisenhower claimed to have done this—Bart Bernstein questions his claim, but I find it credible—and possibly B---

(4)--A wide range of officials advised the president to offer settlement terms at Potsdam, and in many cases to warn of Soviet entry then (true) *in order—explicitly or implicitly—to avert use of the Bomb.*

[No one made this policy aim—avoidance of use of the Bomb—explicit in their discussions or recommendations concerning settlement terms or warnings at Potsdam, and there is no evidence of this implicit motivation, really for any of them. No one even suggested to hst—except Eisenhower, and possibly B-- --that the Bombs should not be used without or before making the offer (or warning of Soviet entry), let alone that they should not be used at all.]

(5)--The Bomb would be an unprecedented departure from or violation of the Just War proscription of the deliberate killing of non-combatants. [Few of the historians critical of the Bomb decision—with some exceptions—connected the decision with the preceding five months of obliterating firebombing of civilians in Japan, or the earlier efforts to create firestorms—two or three successful, but many attempts--in Germany].

(6)--(Kuznick) Truman well understood that the Bombs might destroy civilization (as foretold in the Bible, Revelation: note that Truman was a Baptist, probably a fundamentalist: was he not a dispensationalist, an Armageddonist? No one has explored this possibility that he saw such an outcome as God’s will, necessary for the return of the Messiah); *and* understood that US use would make an arms race and such an outcome more likely [no evidence for this: it’s not self-evident: see Conant, et al]. Kuznick especially condemns him for going ahead in light of this supposed awareness (based on his diary entries.)

Aside from this last point, the points above often lead to the summary assertion by revisionist historians and antinuclear critics that Truman *knew*, with certainty, that the war could be ended on acceptable terms without invasion—indeed, almost surely before August 6--and without using the Bombs and consciously chose not to do so, deliberately

prolonging the war (at the cost of the crew of the Indianapolis) in order to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the Bombs.

Among those who assert this, there is a variety of opinions as to why Truman and Byrnes made this choice, or as to the relative importance of various considerations: but all agree that none of these reasons come close to justifying the decision in moral terms or long-run interests. None of these, it seems obvious, has the plausibly compelling weight of “averting a million (or half a million, or sixty thousand) US deaths in an invasion,” the supposedly certain alternative posed spuriously in 1946 by Stimson (and his ghost-writer, McGeorge Bundy, mentored by Conant).

But none of these premises is well-founded on evidence, and some are definitely false, as stated. Putting them aside, along with the summary conclusion, what we do know about the decision-making is damning enough. To say the least, it contrasts sharply with the official version of events and official knowledge. But the facts known to almost all historical specialists, which demolish the “necessity defense, the justification, the lesser evil defense” that has been widely promulgated by officials ever since and by court historians and journalists, are scarcely known at all among the general public (especially those whose opinions were first formed in the late Forties).

Virtually every premise of the official, Stimson/Bundy/Conant line is false, and was known to be by its authors. Its wide acceptance reflects not only a wishful desire in the public to be persuaded of this reassuring thesis about their WWII leaders (thus, reassuring about the electorate, about their country, and about current leaders) but very systematic lying, concealment and deception by those leaders and later ones (many of whom may themselves have been deceived, but who have never seen any political benefit in using their access in office to find out better: any more than JFK found it expedient to admit error and educate the public about the missile gap in 1961 when he did find out better).

The justification defense, based on entirely false descriptions of the decision context in 1945, is still accepted by the majority of the American people (somewhat less among the younger generation). Thus, Americans accept by and large that the greatest act of state terrorism in human history (so far) was, after all, thoroughly *justified*: under the existing circumstances (and reasonable, controlling beliefs), which were extreme and unusual, but not unprecedented and with every likelihood of reoccurring in the possibly not-distant future. And if the terroristic firebombing, and the two atomic bombs, were justified, *then what massacre—at least, done under American auspices--could not be, under any circumstances?* Answer: none.

(I once heard William Colby, when he was head of the CIA, justify his past direction of the Phoenix program—which claimed 20,000 “neutralizations,” but to which the GVN attributed 40,000 assassinations—on this basis: “If Hiroshima was justifiable, then...”)

[To avoid cognitive (and patriotic) dissonance—given that the facts of the A-bombings could not be hidden or denied (as the Nanking massacre has been hidden or denied in Japan, and the firebombing effectively ignored: what is the right word here, for a well-documented event that remains unknown to the public, by lying and misdirection and motivated neglect by officials, press and scholars?)—it has been necessary either to reject the moral/legal proposition that “terror” (like torture) is illegitimate and forbidden in all circumstances, by anyone for any reasons, and/or to define terror (and torture) as something done only by states or actors other than American officials or allies.

In practice, both of these are relied on by most officials and the population. To the extent that people (like Bush) feel comfortable in condemning “terror” across the board—as “evil”—they rely on the definitional limitation, or more commonly, simply *neglect* to consider this or apply it in connection with American actions: an instance of Orwell’s “double-think.”]

[Would the Bomb have been used if it had been available in World War I? (Its possibility was imagined by H.G. Wells even before that: though necessary scientific and perhaps technological advances lay five, ten and twenty years ahead.) Almost certainly yes: despite the lack of a Hitler, or a supposedly fanatic enemy population (Japanese). See, Douhet and Billy Mitchell; and the use of gas, and dirigibles over London. And the *true* prospects of million-man casualties in forthcoming offensives. Prior months of firebombing would not have been a necessary precursor: though those, too, would *certainly* have been used if feasible. Those who predicted such developments between the wars—after Wells (who stirred Szilard’s imagination), The Pallid Giant, and James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon* (1934, reflecting the Japanese bombing of Shanghai in 1932) were absolutely right.

That American majority regarding the A-bombings as necessary, justified, legitimate, along with the contemporary American nuclear arms programs, was very great in the Fifties and early Sixties when the nuclear arms race was gaining full momentum, and when the equation Stalin (or his Bolshevik successors) = Hitler was scarcely questioned. So the “deterrence problem” was conceived almost without question as the problem of *detering a Hitler armed with nuclear weapons*.

(Joe Rotblat—the one physicist who left the Manhattan Project when he learned in the fall of 1944 that there was no German program, which eliminated what had been for him the sole reason for his participation-- pointed out to me in the Eighties that the above objective probably would have been literally impossible against the real Hitler! He simply could not have been prevented from using his Bomb by the prospect or experience of having it used against Germany: he was the arch-type of the “non-deterrable.” Thus, Rotblatt concluded after the war, he should have recognized this as an invalid argument for a US/UK Bomb from the beginning, in 1939-42.

(On the other hand—I never raised this with him—the chance of his being destroyed himself would have been greater, or the chance of his being overthrown by his

military, especially if the US had several Bombs and he had only one or two. And even though Rotblat saw deterrence as the only legitimation for the Bomb, other physicists and officials saw it for war-fighting from the beginning, even Szilard. By late 1944, neither of these reasons should have applied, at least, as necessary to win: but Szilard did not seem to know, or accept, the conclusion that Hitler had no nuclear program, **or** that the war would be over before our Bomb could be ready. **Check with Lanouette.)**

But even if it had ever been judged (other than by Rotblat) that Hitler had been “non-deterrable,” it was believed—indeed, it was convenient in this context to believe—that Stalin and his successors were marginally more “rational” and prudent than Hitler, and less impatient, though equally ruthless (probably true for Stalin) and equally rapacious and boundlessly ambitious for global domination (untrue even for Stalin, let alone his successors). [It was equally convenient in 2002 that Saddam Hussein, unlike Stalin, **was** “non-deterrable,” against virtually conclusive evidence from the Gulf War to the contrary. And now, Iran leaders likewise.]

I myself accepted this characterization in 1958, at RAND: the contemporary and future problem (in the worst, but realistically possible case) was deterring a Hitler-like adversary armed with nuclear weapons. (See that current official characterization of the terrorist threat. It has more realism than before! But nuclear *deterrence* can play virtually no role against a stateless terrorist, even if he or his aides do display a modicum of prudence.)

As I put it in a lecture in 1959, it was not that Khrushchev was Hitler; but I was ready to believe that he could be tempted to *become like* Hitler, in his actions, threats and risk-taking, if he were allowed to have the degree of nuclear superiority that my RAND colleagues expected him to have by 1960-61 in the absence of determined counter-efforts of the sort they were urgently recommending. (This was during the Berlin crises. I was twenty-eight, just two years out of the Marine Corps, and had spent the spring of 1959 analyzing Hitler’s successful threats in the late Thirties, an analysis which was the basis of this lecture.)

The effect of this successful indoctrination of Americans about Hiroshima was that the Bombs were introduced to Americans (and to a lesser extent, the world) in the most dangerous possible light from the point of view of abolishing nuclear weapons or avoiding future nuclear wars.

That persistent historical misunderstanding in America still weighs down efforts to delegitimize the threatened use or even possession of nuclear weapons. As most Americans see it, circumstances *did* once occur that thoroughly legitimated their actual use in destroying three hundred thousand civilians. So obviously, they *could* occur again. Indeed, other Cold War misapprehensions about the proclivities of the Soviet leadership, and about their actual nuclear programs, made that reoccurrence not unlikely at all, even, in the minds of some, ultimately unavoidable. Arguments that the use of nuclear weapons *could never* be justified or legitimate run up against the deeply-rooted conviction of most Americans that *their use has already once been unequivocally*

justified, and moreover, that the current ambitions and concrete preparations of a Hitler-like adversary of the US meant that those same circumstances could arise at almost any time in the near future.

Even so, it is nevertheless also true that the majority of the public supports the idea of a serious effort to abolish nuclear weapons, even while they are pessimistic about the actual prospects of achieving this. On the former point, they are at great odds with the majority of elites, opinion leaders, current officials at any given time (less so, lately, with former officials!) who regard abolition as both totally infeasible *and undesirable* in terms of US interests. But this gap, like a number of others concerning social policies, between the public and the leadership has not had much effect on policy. Partly this is because public opinion on this point seems not to be urgently or deeply felt, not a high priority, not enough so as to affect voting behavior significantly, in comparison to other issues.

I do happen to think that the misconceptions about Hiroshima play a significant role in this passivity. They give substance to the warnings by the Establishment that, even after the Cold War, US nuclear weapons *might again* be “needed” (as, it goes without saying to Americans, they once were, in 1945, and then, consensually, throughout the Cold War).

In terms of realities almost entirely unknown to the general public, I believe that there has *never* been a historical situation-- since the first test of a nuclear device in July, 1945—in which a nuclear threat or attack has been either “necessary,” legitimate, or justified in moral, legal or consequential terms. And that includes Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It applies to each and every one of the several dozen instances I have identified in which American presidents discussed, considered, and in many cases explicitly threatened the imminent first-use of nuclear weapons in a crisis or conflict since Nagasaki. And it applies to the production, deployment and possession of nuclear weapons on the scale and of the nature of our actual nuclear forces at every moment of the nuclear era from 1945 to January 2009 and beyond. At not one moment since 1945 could our actual nuclear posture be regarded as legitimately justified by the circumstances actually prevailing.

To say that is not to assume that our officials could always have known those actual circumstances with high confidence, or sometimes, at all. It is not to deny that prevailing beliefs—sometimes plausible (though often contradicted by other experts, who turned out to be right)—often seemed to call for and legitimate the proposed and actual postures, despite their obviously catastrophically destructive potential. It is simply to say that in *every single instance*, every moment of that era, *those legitimating beliefs were mistaken*. The rationales—often sincerely believed (though often not)—in terms of alleged facts and expert predictions, and arguments based on them *were always unfounded in reality*. *The conclusion, from year to year, that our nuclear posture and policies were “necessary” and therefore justified and legitimate has always been wrong in the past, up to the present.*

To use a current analogy, it has been, in every year and every crisis, just as wrong as the argument that it was necessary and legitimate for the US to invade Iraq because Saddam Hussein had secretly maintained a large arsenal of WMDs and an intense pursuit of nuclear weapons.

That is an impressive historical conclusion, if true. It's certainly not self-evident, or immediately acceptable, perhaps even plausible, to historical specialists or most well-informed anti-nuclear activists and critics. It needn't be accepted just because I say it; but I do say it on the basis of very prolonged and intensive study of this history, enlightened by unusual personal inside experience during an earlier decade.

Even so, it doesn't prove, of course, that the future, or the present, must be like the past. It doesn't prove that current judgments that a large stock of nuclear weapons and threats of possible first-use are necessary and justified at this moment and in the foreseeable future are unfounded and mistaken. All I say is that such judgments have always been wrong, and dangerously misleading, before. Always. In every case.

That *is* highly relevant to judging the reliability of these judgments in the present circumstances. That is, indeed, why my proposition is so widely contradicted by those advocating the continuation of our nuclear policies, why false factual beliefs to the contrary have been energetically promulgated for so long (to great effect).

[1961-63, pre-Brezhnev and after recon satellite photography, --early 1962, if JFK could have turned on a dime!-- was a time for radical delegitimation and reversal of our nuclear policies. But... likewise, 1989 to the present! Now!]

--What if: the truth had been told about Hiroshima in 1945, or at time of Hersey book, 1946—instead of the lies.

--What if: the many who knew the Stimson (Bundy/Conant) lies had exposed them at the time, OR LATER?

--What if: Rabinowitz or Szilard had revealed to the public what was to come, forced public debate (perhaps by their own prosecution! 793! (espionage?!) as FBI feared? Or, Einstein (who would have been forced to enter the debate. And Eleanor Roosevelt? AND HENRY WALLACE! Public disclosure would have (?) forced him to take a stand! And all the other insiders, civilian and *military*! There might even have been a hearing, with testimony (closed).

(I don't think I've ever thought of this angle before. Nor did Rabinowitz think of this effect of his disclosure: ! He didn't know of existence of doves, and more than Ball knew of Humphrey! (A reason why dove advice—non-military—is forced by president to be “for his ears only”: so those with these views won't discover each other, won't gang up on him, discuss going public or a joint resignation, like the “Saturday Night Massacre” (not planned by the resignees: just two of them, though Cox confronted them with the challenge; as I proposed to force Wolf or Rowen to fire me. (cf Blagowitz!) Rather,

Oppie shrinks even from resigning from the GAO, publicly: under clever influence of Acheson/ "FDR". Like NSC-4, who **waste** their joint resignation, exert NO influence, rather than "scream bloody murder." ("murder most foul"—ref?)

Did any of the officials actually feel this strongly about avoiding the Bomb? It would be understandable if they didn't, given the firebombing campaign since March. **How aware were civilian—or most USAF—officials aware of the nature and effects of the firebombing campaign? (BOOK) Was there really *no* internal concern about this?** Was there any religious protest expressed about this, as there was in Britain earlier? Did the Mormons, or other religious bodies that protested Hiroshima, protest about the firebombing? How much discussion was there of it, at all?

(What if it had been the case, and become widely known, that we were shooting prisoners en masse? Torturing? Systematically raping in Germany, as the Russians were doing?)

Like the use of the atomic bombs, the apparent "success" of the **firebombing**, done by us against an aggressor who had used similar tactics, and followed by no prosecutions (of them or of us) had the effect of legitimizing this tactic—and population bombing-- in warfare, as even Robert Jackson asserted (the "common law, the practice of nations, had changed": yeah, as we imitated, ten-fold, the crimes of the totalitarian aggressors. (Totalitarian: propaganda using radio, regulations punishing private or public deviations from it as (Orwell) thought-crime, enforced by secret thought police...)

But as with atomic bombs, the official line on these—stressing the (false) extreme circumstances of its use, and implicitly, of its justification—legitimized these mainly, and unequivocally, only for comparably extreme circumstances. So later nuc threats in less-than-extreme circumstances (not unlike the true circumstances of first-use of atomic bombs) were kept secret, at the time and ever since! (not to raise questions about the true attitudes of officials, and thus the future prospects and likelihood of nuc FU: **whose dangers the public might have over-estimated**, especially in view of the deliberately-fostered false public impression of the nuclear strength of the Soviets! The public might also have cared more about the resulting casualties than the leaders: even though they might not have cared much. (See Vietnam: not hard to keep VNese casualties uncalculated and secret; no one pressed to know. And not much effect when critics did charge their scale, except perhaps for youth. See Iraq now.

Thus, stories of major atrocities (in Iraq; or even Korea, very belatedly, or Vietnam: My Lai, belatedly Tiger Force; McCaffery in Gulf War, highway of death) are presented as individual, isolated aberrations, the result of low-level initiatives, not policy or high-level direction. In this form, they have very little impact on the public, nor do they arouse public mobilized pressure. The public "accepts" even a high level of "collateral damage," *unintended* by high officials, supposedly even undesired (not "bonus"). The public accepts the distinction between "their terrorism—intended killing of civilians" and Israeli or US killing of civilians which is "unintended, though unavoidable, and minimized, by the most scrupulous concern and militarily restrained troops in history"

(paraphrase of recent characterizing of Israeli operations in Gaza by Olmert, in face of criticism).

Would they react differently if the public knew the real scale of these atrocities (Tiger-Force-like killings in Vietnam; Thanh Phong/ Free Fire Zones (see Kerry in 1971; he could have been referring to actions of Medal of Honor winner, and Senator before Kerry (?) Robert Kerrey); casualties from airpower in Iraq, or at check-points)

And knew that they resulted from SOPs, attitudes of commanders, and highest-level directives (torture)?

Certainly officials show concern that this information might cause them trouble; they show it by their determined and systematic effort to conceal this information, conducting policies like covert operations (preparing counter-evidence in case of leaks, and cover stories, and secret legal opinions). This effort is almost always effective for long, postponing discovery until leaks are only of “ancient history” (ideally, of a former administration). If leaks do occur while practices are ongoing (NSA surveillance—Tamm—and torture and CIA camps) great effort is expended (successfully) to prevent Congressional investigation or hearings or prosecutions (see this month, start of new administration!).

Does this mean that “the public would not allow these practices, if they knew of them in a timely fashion”? Or that officials think this is or might be so? (as Noam Chomsky, and now Brian Willson, think, or say)

Maybe. But not necessarily. Officials’ efforts to keep these practices covert could be motivated by no more than avoiding inconvenience, undesired controversy, perhaps a necessity to make new promises (they don’t intend to keep) or concessions on other matters they would prefer to avoid, at worse, individual embarrassment and the need to sacrifice some scapegoats (Libby; not even Rove had to go, at the time! Let alone Rumsfeld, despite truly unprecedented military protest.)

[See the effort throughout WWII by the UK and USG to keep secret the deliberate targeting of civilians and aims of the firebombing. Was this “necessary” or simply convenient, and in effect, a favor to the sensibilities of civilians? In any case, it was never felt as comparably necessary for Japan as for Germany: with the large constituency of Germans in America, while Japanese were interned!

See Michael Sherry, *The Rise of American Airpower*, pp. 106-115, “The Paper Cities of Japan,” particularly p. 115, Gen. Marshall backgrounder to US journalists on Saturday, November 15, 1941: “We are preparing an offensive war against Japan, whereas the Japs believe we are preparing only to defend the Philippines.” “Nor, he added, was this simply a clever bluff. Even if the scheme failed [to avert war by deterring the Japanese] and war occurred, ‘we’ll fight mercilessly. Flying fortresses will be dispatched immediately to set the paper cities of Japan n fire... There won’t be any hesitation about bombing civilians—it will be all-out.’”]

I've had this question in mind a long time. Increasingly, I've had to give more weight to the latter hypothesis. The former, Chomsky proposition—"people don't like to be associated with torture, massacre, aggression" (true: so officials try to spare them that feeling, by secrecy and lies) "and" implicitly, "they wouldn't permit it to occur, if they knew"—is, I increasingly suspect, sentimental, apologetic, romantic, naïve, about most "people." It is another, equally unreliable and misleading (inspirational, reassuring, but misdirected in the hopes and actions it may inspire) form of "If the tsar only knew..." (See the beliefs of whistleblowers about the bombing of Cambodia, and of NVN, that the was being misled. Indeed, this was the heart of the Quagmire Myth, by various former "President's Men" (Schlesinger, Goodwin; Galbraith?): **"the president was being regularly misled by the predictions and recommendations of the military, and by McNamara."** The Pentagon Papers disproved this, and focused responsibility for policy and lies on the presidents.

Earlier, my own efforts were based on getting documents to the president, informing him by studies and revelations, better to manage his own subordinates and make better judgments. (see my crisis studies). My own hopes were then, after reading the PP, redirected to informing Congress and the public.

But the public was again easily fooled into believing, wishfully, that history was not being repeated by the current president. And Congress was unwilling to accept blame for depriving the troops of bullets while they were still in-country, exposed to attack, or for what would follow in VN if *they* removed the troops. (Would they really, as Nixon believed, have cut off all funds after the Christmas bombing, if Nixon had not removed the troops? Maybe: given their rage at not being consulted about the Hanoi bombing (as, not being consulted about the invasion of Cambodia: that was the time when concerted public pressure, with massive CD in DC, might have led to a cutoff: a good time to release the PP, myself, instead of counting on Fulbright to do it).

"If Congress only knew..." "If the press only knew..." (see the NYT and Tamm's leaks in 2004) "If the public only knew..." (Abu Ghraib...)

(It would nice to believe that Obama was elected especially to end torture, rendition, CIA camps, and Guantanamo—or Constitutional abuses. But he didn't run on any of those, any more than Kerry did! Would either he or Clinton have won without the economy collapsing? He does have a mandate to get out of Iraq (whether or not he fulfills it); but he could just as well say he has a mandate to surge in Afghanistan, another promise of his!)

Back to the nuclear era: No real (limiting) rationale had to be given for the firebombing, because there was almost no (any?) public or Congressional discussion of it, attention to it, perhaps even real awareness of it, during or after the war (to this day). Thus, it was

used again in Korea, again without public attention or concern, and without great effort at concealment. Yet: it was not used, in the same fashion, in Vietnam; nor, directly, in the Gulf War or Iraq. Effort has at least gone into disguising our impact on the civilian population, downplaying it or lying about it.

More significantly, the nature of our NATO planning is mostly unknown to the American public. (It is known in Europe, though not the scale or impact). And the FU threats have been systematically concealed. **Ask, why?** (See above, on consequences of exaggerating the instability of the “Delicate Balance,” which itself was a foundational rationale for the expanded military budget. Recall that the “delicacy” argument itself rested on assumptions about the psychology, values, priorities, of the Soviets, as they were or might become, their willingness to risk or accept various levels of destruction. The strongest basis for these assumption would have been, in fact, a mirror-imaging of *American* attitudes (toward risk-taking and damage-limiting, though not for preventive war: there RAND mirror-imaged LeMay, their boss! McNamara’s former boss! Not Eisenhower or Truman, though the Soviets were not paranoid in worrying otherwise.)

Assessing blame, removing personnel, punishing, are not the only reasons, motives, for asking and investigating “what did the president/intelligence analysts/Congress/press/public know, and when did they know it?”

There is also the need to understand the values, preconceptions, predilections, priorities, perceived alternatives of the people in question, to arrive at inferences about the future behavior of similar people—drawn from similar populations, by a similar process—within a similar *system*: both to predict behavior in other situations, and to infer needs to change the system, education processes, perhaps to choose different sorts of people (if feasible) by different processes.

Nor is the Baker formula adequately formulated, with its focus on “know.” These inferences must reflect not only “what did they *know*?” but what did they guess, with what degrees of confidence, what did they *not* know, for sure or with high weight (range of probabilities?), and why did they not know it? The latter, because they chose not to investigate, were in denial, chose to ignore contrary voices (for questionable or wishful reasons), “needed not to know”, cultivated doubt (climate change, tobacco, abandonment of programs by Iraq or Iran), deliberately excluded or slandered critics...?

What *could* they have “known” (with various degrees of effort, and various degrees of likelihood); what “should” they have known, given their role and responsibility and their opportunities for investigation, what was it “their duty to know” (the Speer challenge: to himself, but to many others, like McNamara about civilian casualties in North and South)?